Mayday Victims Cite Police Improprieties

By Bart Barnes 5/30/71

By a Washington Post Staff Writer

The way police cadet Paul Rosa of the Melbourne (Fla.) police department tells it, his car was second in a line of traffic at the intersection of 19th and E Streets NW.

The time was 8:30 a.m., May 3.

Up ahead, the intersection was being blocked by anti-war demonstrators. Rosa, 22, left his car to take some photographs. Then he got back in his car to wait for the street to clear.

And then, as it did to more than 7,000 people here on that day, the metropolitan police department came to Paul Rosa.

"I saw a person I believed to be a policeman (he was in plain clothes) approching my car," Rosa said. "He reached in and started hitting me with his club. Then he and another officer pulled me out of the car."

Rosa was charged at first with obstructing traffic, but the offense was later changed to disorderly conduct.

He says he was held in custody until 4 a.m. the following day, when he was released pending trial.

Upon returning to Melbourne, he told his supervisor where he had been a police cadet just over a year, what had happened, hoping that his superiors would be able to intercede in his behalf.

But the next day, Melbourne Police Chief Robert J. Cotron suspended Rosa from the force for getting arrested in Washington.

On May 12, Rosa, in company with Addison Bowman of the Georgetown legal intern program, visited the D.C. corporation counsel's office, and the charges against Rosa were dropped.

PAUL ROSA
. . . police cadet arrested

He is still suspended from the Melbourne police department, however.

Rosa is one of hundreds of defendants who have contention procedures arising from the Mayday protests of May 3, 4 and 5.

See SUSPEND, A8, Col. 1

SUSPEND, From A1

The local chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union has collected approximately 350 affidavits from either defendants or persons who witnessed arrests. Spokesmen say they plan to use the information in a lawsuit against the police and city officials .

In addition, forms have mailed out to another2,000 persons who have requested them, ACLU officials said.

For their part ,the police have defended the mass arrest techniques employed May 3 as the only practical way of coping with a deliberate attempt to "close down the government" by blocking traffic into Washington.

Rosa, who also is a part-time college student, said he to find a way out of the city"when he was arrested.

Missing Cameras

"They just pulled my car over to the side of the road and left it open. When I got back, my cameras were gone. Somebody stole them," Rosa said.

He said he told the policemen who arrested him that he was a police cadet and that the policemen swore at him. He was put on a bus and taken to the D.C. jail courtyard. He was held there until 11 p.m. when he was transferred to the coliseum, which police rented to handle the overflow of prisoners.

Rosa's superiors on the Melbourn police force are awaiting a written report on his arrest from the Washington police, before deciding whether to lift the suspension.

As far as is known, Rosa is the only member of a police force arrested here May 3. But the list also includes some lawyers, newsmen, teachers and free-lance writers. One false arrest suit already is pending against police and city officials.

In the affidavits filed with the ACLU, most defendants and witnesses say they were doing nothing illegal when arrested, although several admit to being in the area with the intent to join the protest.

ACLU officials made the texts of the affidavits available to The Washington Post on the condition that the names and addresses of the signers be withheld.

An Arlington man said he was arrested at 8 a.m. May 3 near the 14th Street Bridge "while in jogging apparel" and a women from Montgomery Village said police arrested her for refusing an order "to get out and pick up debris in the street" near DuPont Circle.

14-Hour Detention

The jogger said he was held for 14 hours before being released.